

10/18/99

MINUTES
PLANNING AND LAND USE STANDARDS COMMISSION MEETING
October 18, 1999, 6:00 p.m.

The Planning and Land Use Standards Commission met Monday, October 18, 1999, 6:00 p.m. in the 2nd floor courtroom of the Thomas County Courthouse. Commission members present were: Perry Bond, Bea Griffin, David McGill, Melton Hobbs, and Joe Pogue. Also present were Johnny L. Reichert and Dianna Beall of the Thomas County Planning Department. Mack McDougald called from Orlando at 3:30 p.m., stating that he had been unavoidably detained and would be unable to make the meeting. Wayne Parramore was not present.

Perry Bond, Chairman, called the meeting to order.

On Motion of Joe Pogue, seconded by David McGill, minutes of September 20, 1999, PLUS Commission meeting were approved. Aye: Perry Bond, Melton Hobbs, Bea Griffin, Joe Pogue and David McGill. Motion carried.

Chairman Bond introduced Application #99-9-1 - Ferrell Scruggs, Jr. as agent for Philip J. Burdette - Request to rezone from CG to I-CU 20± acres located at 190 Burdette Lane. Mr. Ferrell Scruggs, Jr. presented his request, explaining in detail the type asphalt production facility he wished to place on this site, and stated he felt the type business he proposed was no more intrusive than what was presently there.

Chairman Bond called for opposition.

Mr. Ed Johnson, spokesperson for adjoining property owners, expressed the following concerns:

1. Location unsuitable - adjacent to residential
2. Air Quality
3. Property Values
4. Truck Traffic
 - a. Noise
 - b. Diesel Fumes
 - c. Threat to Children
 - d. Streets designed for residential
 - e. Railroad spur - add to the noise and affect traffic
 - f. Toxic asphalt fumes - OSHA has no plan in place
5. Three churches in the vicinity and Central High School only 2 miles away

Mr. Johnson also introduced a letter from Phyllis Jackson of Sugarwood Lane who was in opposition.

mw

Plant causes a stink

Residents rally against asphalt firm

By LAURA CASSELS

Times-Enterprise

THOMASVILLE — Plans to build an asphalt-production plant just north of Thomasville off Old Cassidy Road is drawing jeers from residents of the area but won unanimous approval Monday from a land-use advisory board to the Thomas County Commission.

The Planning and Land Use Standards (PLUS) Commission voted 5-0 to recommend that county commissioners grant a request to rezone 20 acres on Burdette Lane from commercial general to industrial conditional use.

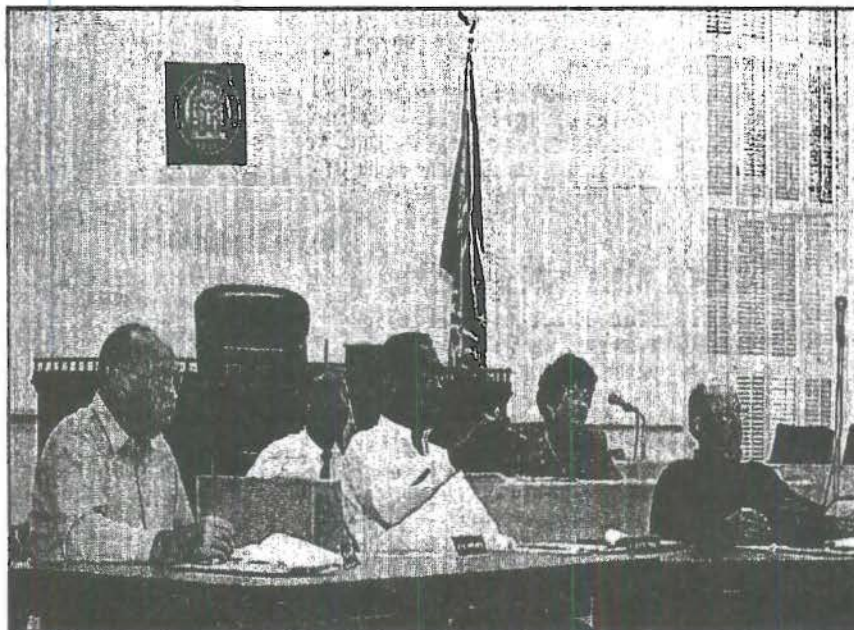
The rezoning is requested by Ferrell Scruggs Jr., president of The Scruggs Co., for land owned by Phillip J. Burdette.

The recommendation will have a final review by county commissioners.

Scruggs said the proposed new plant would replace an older, inferior asphalt plant operating on County Farm Road.

Anxious residents predict the plant will be noisy and smelly and that truck traffic to and from the plant would endanger pedestrians and deteriorate the roads. They also fear the plant will erode property value in their neighborhood.

"We feel that there are many much more appropriate sites in Thomas County for this type of facility and not in the middle of a primarily residential community," said Ed Johnson, spokesperson for 173 neighbors who signed petitions opposing



Kim DeWees/Times-Enterprise

Members of the Planning and Land Use Standards Commission question Ferrell Scruggs Jr. on Monday after he petitioned to build a new asphalt plant on Burdette Lane.

the asphalt plant.

Scruggs said the neighbors' fears are overblown.

"When the plant is running clean and efficient, there is no odor," Scruggs told members of the PLUS Commission, though he conceded all plants foul up sometimes. He added the plant must meet state and federal emissions standards to stay in business.

Scruggs said the plant would host about 20 truck loads daily on average, 60 daily on busy days, with the plant operating about 180 days a year.

PLUS Commission Chairman Perry Bond noted the property now hosts a scrap and salvage yard.

"That property right now is a mess. Everything comes off?" Bond asked Scruggs, who answered yes. Scruggs also said a stand of trees buffering homes from the site would be left standing.



Kim DeWees/Times-Enterprise

Ferrell Scruggs Jr. answers questions from the PLUS Commission.

"They could have a trucking business on it right now," said PLUS Commission member Joseph Pogue, who made the motion to recommend approval of the rezoning.

Commission member David McGill seconded, and members

Bond, Bea Griffin and Melton Hobbs voted in favor.

The county's planning and land-use staff wrote that having residential zoning right next to commercial or industrial zoning, as in this case, is in conflict with the county's 1996 zoning ordinance but also pre-dated it and is grandfathered. The present zoning allows even more objectionable uses, the staff noted.

The staff report predicted no decline in value of existing property but possible adverse impact on future value of undeveloped parcels.

The staff recommended approval of the request with conditions limiting hours of operating (Scruggs said 7 a.m. to 5 p.m., three to five days weekly), limits on truck routing and adherence to all laws and rules on noise, light and ventilation.

Please see PLANT, page 5A

The angry, disappointed neighbors said they felt sold out, with taxes to be paid by the asphalt plant winning out over the safety and enjoyment of their neighborhood.

"Scruggs said the benefits are for the city and the county," Allen Bloodsworth said.

"But there are no benefits for us, the residents," Pam Bloodsworth said.

Kent Croft demanded to know why the plant should not be built in an industrial park, away from homes. And Janice Scovel said she fears the truck

traffic will endanger children.

"What about the school buses? I'm concerned about the kids," Scovel said.

Those same trucks, Johnson said, would spread the odor of asphalt.

"We've got to deal with those big trucks coming out spreading those fumes all over ... in a residential area," Johnson said.

The opponents said they have not given up and will take it to county commissioners.

To contact reporter Laura Cassels, please call (912) 226-2400, ext. 225.

► YOUR OPINIONS

Residents' concerns haven't been addressed

The PLUS Commission ignored the concerns of 95-plus percent of the residents of the impact area being considered for the location of an asphalt plant.

The Scruggs Co. pushed the dollar buttons by telling commissioners that the location would put profit on their bottom line and allow them to reduce costs on paving contracts for the county.

After hearing the presentation by Ferrell Scruggs Jr., the commission failed to address the concerns of 173 local residents who have signed petitions opposing this plant in their neighborhood.

These concerns which were presented and not addressed were as follows:

- Toxic fumes and odors being spread through their neighborhood by heavy dump trucks hauling hot asphalt and making 50 plus trips daily.

- Lower property values in our neighborhood will surely occur.

- Safety threats posed to our children who play, jog, bicycle and walk along the narrow residential streets which have no sidewalks. This threat is real when you consider the number of heavily loaded trucks we will be threatened by and the diffi-

culty in stopping these vehicles in an emergency situation.

- Noise pollution will be greatly increased by this plant operation because of the huge diesel dumptrucks roaring by our homes all day and the increase of railroad traffic clanking and horn blowing as they make deliveries to this plant.

I feel strongly that the residents of Thomas County were misled when this PLUS commission was put in place. We were told repeatedly that a very significant function of this commission would be to protect the residents and property owners from being victimized by parties who are influenced by increasing their wealth without regard for the health, safety or economic concerns of those who will be harmed. This is precisely what is happening in this case.

The Scruggs Co. has an existing asphalt plant located off County Farm Road in the vicinity of the Thomas County solid waste site. This is an ideal location for this type of operation, as it has no impact on any residential area, no safety concerns or lowered property values. The primary reason given for relocation was to increase their bottom line.

Ed Johnson

Spokesperson for Impacted
Neighborhood
Thomasville

THOMASVILLE NEWS OCT 23, 2000

File: Ferrell Scruggs

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Rebuttals

Tony Huber stated that all the concerns of the opponents to this land use change will be governed by the state or local government.

Emory Mayfield of Tallahassee, one of the partners in Regional Developers, Inc., stated to the Board that this project is not involved in any lawsuits.

Commissioner Sherrod stated that this project is larger than any project in Thomasville and any surrounding areas.

Mr. Jim Heldenreich stated that this project would be completed in three phases.

Public Hearing for #99-9-1

Application #99-9-1, Ferrell Scruggs, Jr. as agent for Phillip J. Burdette, 190 Burdette Lane - 20 acre tract rezoned from CG to I-CU for the purpose of an asphalt plant.

Ferrell Scruggs, Jr. spoke to the Board and stated that he would like to use this property as the site for an asphalt plant. Mr. Scruggs emphasized lower freight rates that would be valuable to him at this site.

Chuck Dunham Operations for Scruggs Company stated that this plant and all operations would be governed by state and local government. Mr. Gunner read a letter to the Board from a citizen living near the old plant, which stated that she didn't have a problem with the plant near her property.

Attorney Jack Morse came forward speaking on behalf of 224 residents of Cassidy Road, who are opposed to the proposed asphalt plant. Mr. Morse presented a petition with 224 signatures citing numerous reasons for opposition as follows: safety, noise, decline in property values and pollution.

Ed Johnson, a resident and land owner near the proposed site for the asphalt plant stated his opposition included pollution, decreased property value, extra truck traffic and noise.

Sandra Hennessey, Sunnybelle Acres trailer park, stated that this area is a peaceful place, and she is concerned about their roads and density of population.

Melvin Darby, local Realtor cited decline in property values.

Marty Richardson opposed this land use change request citing the smell of asphalt, the danger of increased truck traffic and environmental impact.

Allen Bulter cited noise, wetlands and safety of the streets for the children as his reasons for opposition to land use change for the proposed asphalt plant.

Levy Onyegbula stated that he lives 400 yds from the proposed area of the asphalt plant and he opposes the land use change because of pollution and safety.

Claude Crocker asked who would repair the pot holes and the damage the big trucks will cause.

Betty Mashburn stated that she is concerned about child safety.

Randy Clark asked if Mr. Scruggs had evaluated another location for his asphalt plant.

Mr. Scruggs stated that he had not looked at another site because this site was chosen because the railroad line was excellent for his business on the proposed site.

page 3 Bd. Met. 10/25/99

Steve Nesmith stated that his opposition is that the trucks could not stop easily in case of an emergency.

Hewy Hewitt stated opposition because the asphalt plant would be located within 1600 feet of a water well.

Rebuttal

Mr. Ferrell Scruggs, Jr. stated that this proposed area is zoned for commercial travel and his company travels and works roads, all over the city and county. Mr. Scruggs also stated that his company has a good driving record with the state. Mr. Scruggs stated that his company is willing to greatly improve the proposed site for his business.

Mr. Reichert stated that the Zoning Board and the Planning Staff both recommended that Application #99-9-1 be approved.

Ferrell Scruggs

On motion of Commissioner Sherrod seconded by Commissioner Mullins the Board voted 7-1 to deny the land use request 99-9-1 to change the land use from CG to I-CU under

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the auspices of the Zoning Policies, Procedures and Standards of Thomas County #4, 7, 10, and 11. Aye: Commissioner Herring, Mullins, Smith, Brown, Abrams, Miller and Sherrod. Abstention: Commissioner Gross.

Mr. Reichert stated that the Zoning Board and Planning Staff both recommended that Application #99-9-2 be granted.

James Mullins

On motion of Commissioner Mullins seconded by Commissioner Smith the Board voted unanimously to grant Application #99-9-2 to change the use of this property from R-3 to CG.

Mr. Reichert stated that the Zoning Board and Planning Staff both recommended that Application #99-9-3 be granted.

24th Storage

On motion of Commissioner Mullins seconded by Commissioner Sherrod the Board voted unanimously to grant Application #99-9-3 to change the use of this property from Ag. to CG.

Committee Reports

County Manager Mike Stephenson reminded the Board of several meetings for this week to include: Personnel Committee Meeting, Tuesday, October 26, 9:00 a.m., at the Public Library, CI Committee Meeting, Wednesday, October 27, 4:00 p.m., at CI and Finance Committee, Friday, November 5, 1999, 9:00 a.m., in the second floor courtroom.

Commissioner Smith reported that the City of Coolidge has requested assistance in repairing and cleaning various roads and roadside.

Mr. Smith asked that this request be referred to the Road Committee and Andy Maxwell.

On motion of Commissioner Mullins seconded by Commissioner Sherrod the Board voted unanimously to accept Committee reports, pay all approved bills and adjourn.

Residents win asphalt battle

County commission nixes plans for new plant

By LAURA CASSELS

Times Staff Writer

THOMASVILLE — A plan to build the largest subdivision ever in Thomas County and a plan to build an asphalt plant in a residential area were rejected Monday by the Thomas County Commission, voting before an

audience of roughly 110 people. Commissioner Tim Sherrod made the motions to reject both applications, which requested zoning amendments. Dozens in the audience cheered when commissioners voted 7-0 to deny The Scruggs Co. a rezoning to build a new asphalt manufacturing plant to replace

its old plant on County Farm Road. Ferrell Scruggs Jr., president of the asphalt and paving company, told commissioners he wanted the new site on Bartlett Lane off Old Cassidy Road, because it offers access to cheaper rail freight costs than the current site. "If something doesn't change, I won't be able to stay here long," Scruggs said. "In my current location, I can't compete. I've got to move." He said the new plant would use top-of-the-line technology to

hold down costs and noise, and he insisted asphalt plants are not significant polluters. He said the company's plant in Valdosta is not considered a nuisance, and the operations manager of the Thomasville plant provided a letter from neighbor Jimmy Woodruff saying the plant here had not been bothersome to her. Perhaps the strongest argument for the rezoning was that the current zoning allows near objectionable uses, then Scruggs proposed in his rezoning request. Presently, the site serves as a junk yard, which Scruggs had

pledged to clean up. Attorney Jack Albino Sr., representing Old Cassidy Road residents, told commissioners they had signed petitions directing to Scruggs' plan. "We are opposed to it being located in a residential area," Albino said. He cited fears that the company's on-site machine wash runoff runs daily 180 days a year would "contaminate" waterways and neighborhoods. "I moved here to a residential area with 40 lots, and I'm in a residential area," Albino said. Please see COUNTY page 7A

Tuesday, Oct. 26, 1999 — 3A

From page 1A

County:

area," Commission Chairman Josh Herring said.

Morse and others predicted the plant and the trucks would be noisy and smelly and that property values would plummet.

"How many people do you think are going to buy a home in close proximity to an asphalt plant?" he asked.

After a lengthy public-comment period, Sherrod moved to reject the rezoning, saying an asphalt plant and the trucking it requires is not appropriate in a neighborhood. He said the current zoning, too, is not appropriate next to a neighborhood but is grandfathered because it predated the county's 1996 zoning ordinance.

The motion to deny passed 7-0, with Commissioner Moses Gross abstaining.

The other plan killed Monday was submitted by Tallahassee, Fla.-based Regional Developers of Thomasville to rezone 294 acres on U.S. 319 North, 2.5 miles north of U.S. 19, from agriculture to R-2. The plan was to sell half-acre lots on roughly 250 acres.

"I doubt you'd find a subdivision bigger than this south of Macon," Sherrod said. "It's 3 1/2 times larger than the largest subdivision in Thomas County. It's a mammoth project."

Jim Heidenreich, president

"I doubt you'd find a subdivision bigger than this south of Macon."

Tim Sherrod
County Commissioner

home park," he said. "They'd like an alternative in this price range."

Heidenreich and his supporters added that the zoning fits the area, which is increasingly converting from agricultural to residential.

Nevertheless, Sherrod's motion passed 7-1, with Herring dissenting.

"I feel it's too large of a project for Thomas County," Sherrod said. Commissioner Ricky Smith, whose district contains the project site, seconded the motion.

Both projects had been recommended favorably by the county's Planning and Land Use Standards Commission.

Also Monday, county commissioners:

- Approved a rezoning for James H. Lawson, 3.5 acres rezoned from R-3 to commercial general at the corner of U.S. 319 North and Horseshoe Circle

- Approved a rezoning for T&H Storage (Robert Hopkins and Marcus Thorntorf), 1.6 acres beside Rose City Church on Ga.

Continued from page 1A

2-23-2000
TIMES SURPRISE

Plant:

rezoning.

Asphalt Plant

In another controversial hearing, Ferrell Scruggs Jr., president of The Scruggs Co., requested a conditional-use permit to let him build a new plant in an area along Ga. 3 near Meigs that already is zoned for industrial use. The Scruggs Co., which wants to buy the site, already has a plant in Thomas County but wants a newer, more modern facility close to rail lines.

The Scruggs Co. was denied a previous rezoning request along Cassidy Road, largely due to objections from neighbors alarmed about potential noise, odors and truck traffic.

Scruggs and representatives of his company reiterated Monday that the plant would not be noisy or produce air pollution, and they argued that the existing zoning for industry is appropriate for this type of plant.

Thomasville attorney Doug Silvis, who first represented the neighbors opposed to the Kirkland rezoning, then represented The Scruggs Co. in regard to the conditional-use permit. He said he was "personally convinced" the asphalt plant poses no threat to the neighborhood surrounding the industrially zoned site.

"I imagine most people had the same impression I had, that it's a pretty dirty business... But this is going to be completely different," Silvis told commissioners.

Anne Hickey was among the many opponents. She said the area already has a lot of industrial trucking traffic and cannot sustain more. Also, she said the presence of mobile homes in the area makes the area no more compatible with industrial uses than if all neighboring homes were site-built.

"Yes, there are trailers there, but they have families in them, with children," Hickey said indignantly. "We need more residential. We don't need more businesses."

Chuck Dunmon, operations manager at the existing asphalt plant, stressed the current zoning would allow more objectionable uses than a well-run

asphalt plant.

"There's a lot of industries that can go in there right now," he said, citing, for example, a sawmill operation.

Commissioner I.L. Mullins' motion to deny the conditional use to Scruggs failed without a second.

Commissioner Josh Herring's motion to grant it drew a second but was outvoted by Commissioner Bobby Brown's substitute motion to table the request until the commission's March 14 meeting.

Herring's motion would have granted the request with conditions, including additional buffers. He said he made the motion because the zoning is appropriate for an asphalt plant and leaves the area open to less desirable uses if the plant is not built there.

Brown said he wanted more time to review the issue. His motion to postpone passed 5-2, with Herring and Miller voting no and Gross abstaining without comment.

Other Business

● Commissioners granted preliminary site approval for Buckhead subdivision on U.S. 319 North as requested by Regional Developers Inc., based

in Tallahassee, Fla.

● Commissioners granted a rezoning from commercial general to multi-family residential as requested by Goodwill Industries Big Bend to build housing for people with disabilities.

● Commissioners granted conditional approval of Tall Timbers subdivision phase II as requested by Melton Hobbs.

● Commissioners voted 7-1, for Commissioner Ricky Smith's motion to use county equipment to level a steep slope on roadside property owned by Ray Bannister, to make it easier for Bannister to mow it. Miller dissented after County Attorney Bruce Warren cautioned that public equipment cannot be used on private property.

● Commission Chairman Tim Sherrod reminded the audience it wasn't until the county adopted its 1996 zoning rules that public hearings on zoning changes were held.

"Whether you're for this or against, at least you had the opportunity for your opinions to be heard," he said.

To contact reporter Laura Cassels, please call (912) 226-2400, ext. 225.

► COMMISSION MEETING

MARCH 12, 2000 TIMES-ENTRAISE

Thomas County commissioners will meet at 5 p.m. Tuesday on the second floor of the County Courthouse to discuss this and other business:

- Public comments.
- Presentation on special-purpose, local-option sales tax (SPLOST) calendar.
- Volunteer Fire Department presentation by Pavo Mayor L.M. Taylor.
- Presentation by John Canfield regarding nuisance complaint.
- Presentation by Communities In Schools (CIS).
- Further consideration of request by The Scruggs Co. for conditional-use permit allowing construction of an asphalt plant on parcel zoned for industry.
- Ratify gas and diesel purchases.
- Bids on metal pipe for public works.
- Bids on body for new cab and chassis for building maintenance.
- Bids on annual pest-control contract for building main-

tenance

- Bids on engineering services for Sanford Road
- Hurst Brothers bid
- Bids for jail-security system.
- Bids on limerock and limerock base.
- Consideration of solid-waste disposal and recycling facility agreement with city of Thomasville.
- Consideration of agreement with Department of Transportation.
- Barnes breach of covenant, penalties.
- Westshore Drive project.
- Request for funds by Emergency Services Board.
- Service contracts with Emergency Services Board.
- Archbold Memorial Hospital, Glenn-Mor Nursing Home crossover.
- 4-H contract.
- Surplus real property.
- Committee reports.
- County manager's report on commissioners' work-program priorities.

After recording, return to:
Silvis & Ambrose, P.C.
P.O. Box 1557
Thomasville, Georgia 31799-1557

THOMAS COUNTY
CLERK OF COURT
PAUL H. SCRUGGS JR.

704 NW -7 11 11: 43

**A RESOLUTION
SCRUGGS ASPHALT PLANT
CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT**

Whereas, The Scruggs Company, hereinafter referred to as "Scruggs", has requested conditional use of 16.43 acres in an Industrial District for the purpose of constructing and operating an asphalt plant, and

Whereas, Scruggs has properly filed an application #00-1-2 to that effect, and

Whereas, Scruggs entered into a written agreement on February 21, 2000 with Kelstone, Inc., the adjacent property owner, and its terms are substantially incorporated in this resolution; and

Whereas, the Thomas County Board of Commissioners desires to approve the conditional use permit requested by Scruggs.

Now therefore be it resolved that Application #00-1-2 is approved subject to the following conditions:

- 1) all applicable permits shall be obtained from County, State and Federal authorities and shall be strictly adhered to by Scruggs.
- 2) All equipment and factory improvements shall be brand new, state-of-the-art, and installed to meet all regulatory guidelines prescribed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Environmental Protection Division.
- 3) A 6-foot chain link fence shall be installed around the entire perimeter of the property at the expense of Scruggs.
- 4) An existing berm on Kelstone, Inc. property shall be extended approximately 250 feet to the Northeast Corner of the applicant property. One new berm shall be constructed from the Southeast corner of the applicant property along the property line Westerly for 600 feet. A second new berm shall be constructed from the Northeast corner of the applicant property along the property line Westerly for 350 feet. Scruggs agrees to bear all costs of

700 250

Box 162 Price 256


Filed & Recorded
David Hutchings, Jr. CSC
47-2000

constructing berms with dirt to be supplied by Kelstone, as agreed. The two new berms shall be constructed to the same elevation and shall meet the same general construction standard as the existing berm on Kelstone, Inc. property. Trees and shrubbery shall be planted on and around the berms to create a sufficient vegetation barrier to noise and sight for the benefit of Kelstone, Inc. property and Riverwind Plantation, with costs shared as agreed between Scruggs and Kelstone.

- 5) On the western property line, facing the railroad tracks and running roughly parallel to Georgia Highway 3, Scruggs shall plant, establish and maintain a vegetation barrier at a minimum height of 6' running the full length of the western property line and extending 30' into the Scruggs property. Elaeagnus shall be planted in the front 15' of the vegetation buffer and loblolly pines in the back 15' of the vegetation buffer. Scruggs shall bear the full cost of the western vegetation barrier.
- 6) Scruggs shall prepare a scaled drawing of the property showing all facilities, buffers, fencing, berms and other features proposed and said drawing shall be an attachment to this resolution.
- 7) Scruggs shall limit asphalt plant operations from 6 a.m. and to 7 p.m., Monday through Friday. Scruggs may from time-to-time work on weekends or nights in the event of bona-fide emergencies.
- 8) All vehicles and equipment of Scruggs shall be prohibited on Nine Dime Doctor Road, a county maintained road except, when crossing, to enter and exit, by way of the main entrance as designated on the attached drawing.
- 9) No other industrial use shall be permitted.
- 10) No truck repair shop will be maintained on the property.

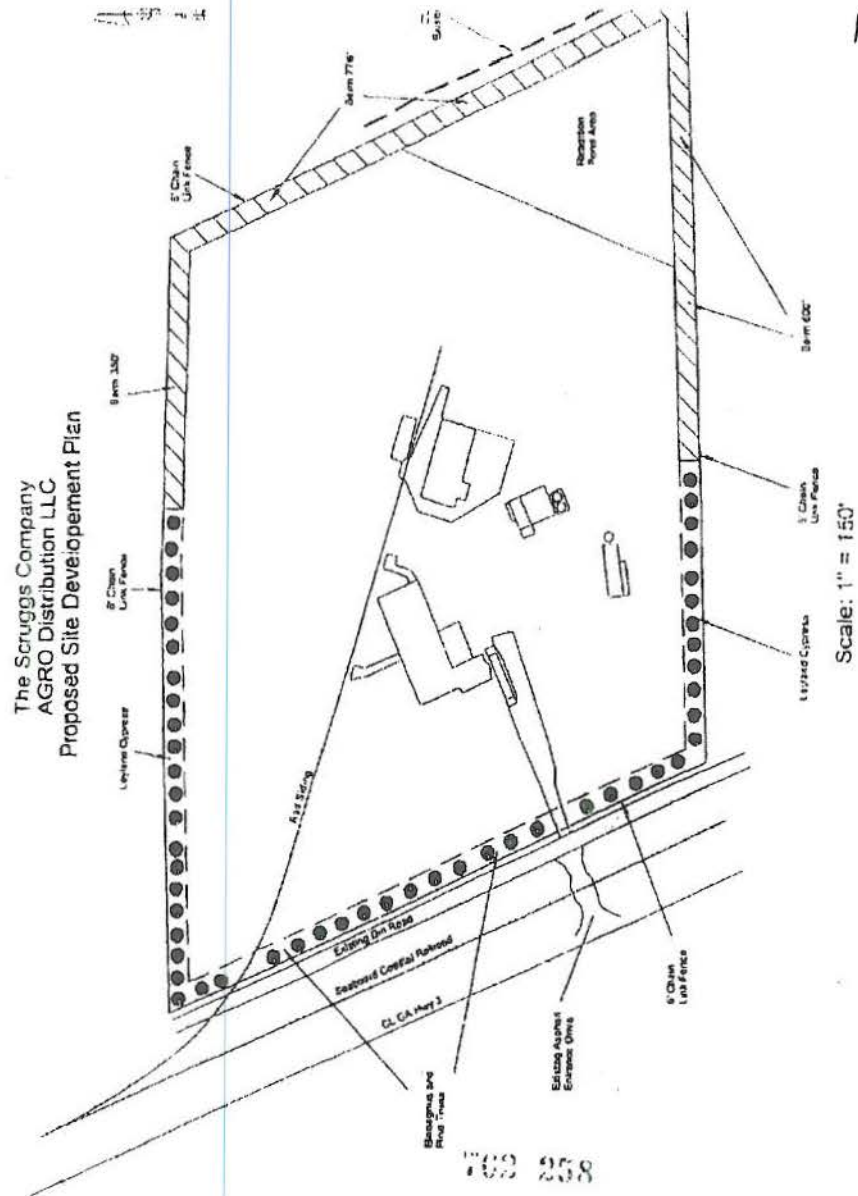
And therefore be it further resolved that the conditional industrial use permitted by this resolution shall be subject to annual review as provided for in county regulations.

Approved in regular Board meeting this the 14th day of March, 2000.


Chairman

Attest: 
County Clerk

2000 2007



County pushes on with tax

If approved in July, new sales tax would take effect next January

By PATTI WARD

Times-Enterprise

THOMASVILLE — Thomas County commissioners voted unanimously Tuesday to put in motion a schedule leading to a July vote on a special purpose local option sales tax (SPLOST).

Commission Chairman Tim

Sherrod said the Tuesday vote was not to call a SPLOST referendum, but to put in motion steps that must be taken before a referendum can be called.

Commissioners must meet with mayors of the county's municipalities, call the referendum in June and advertise the referendum four times before the pro-

posed July 18 vote.

If approved, the tax would go into effect Jan. 1, 2001, with the first revenue to be received in March 2001.

The tax — proposed for 2 1/2 years — would raise about \$14 million, with \$8 million to go for road and bridge improvements and \$6 million for improvements in emergency services.

The money would fund new pumps for the Thomasville fire department and all active volunteer departments, new Thomasville, Boston and

Coolidge fire stations, a headquarters station and a communications building.

Commissioner Jim Miller said 911 consoles should be included in the communications structure.

The proposed tax would fund renovation and upgrades of some emergency facilities.

A revenue breakdown shows:

- New construction — \$2 million.
- Renovation — \$500,000.
- Equipment/vehicle purchases — \$3.5 million.

In road improvements, roads in unincorporated Thomas County would receive \$4 million, as would roads and streets in the county's municipalities.

The sales tax has been a discussion subject for about two years, Sherrod said. "Speaking for myself, I think it's time to put it before the citizens and let them decide," he added.

To calm some taxpayers' concerns, Miller said, local governments must ensure every sales

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Tax:

tax dollar goes for its earmarked purpose.

Commissioners told L.M. Taylor, Pavo mayor and Pavo volunteer fire chief, SPLOST would fund 12 new fire trucks — three for Thomasville and nine for volunteer departments.

Taylor described some volunteer department trucks as "falling apart." "For volunteers of Thomas County to respond and do what we need to do, we need some help — from somebody," he told commissioners.

Taylor said the county's 170

volunteer firefighters would get behind the tax if commissioners can promise them better equipment.

"We're in a mess with these fire trucks, and we know that," Commissioner Josh Herring told Taylor.

Meigs Mayor Wayne Nesmith told the board he "basically" supports what commissioners are trying to do with the proposed tax.

Senior reporter Patti Ward may be reached at (912) 226-2400, ext. 220.

3-28-2006 TIMES ENTERPRISE

County promotes sales tax

Commissioners begin pitching SPLOST to voters, civic groups

By LAURA CASSELS

TIMES-ENTERPRISE

THOMASVILLE — Preparing Thomas County commissioners Monday to promote a new sales tax, County Manager Mike Stephenson reviewed his recent presentation to the Rotary Club outlining the history of lo-

cal consolidation and how the latest taxing plan fits in.

Stephenson gave commissioners an outline of his presentation for their use.

Commissioners are expected to vote in May on scheduling a July 18 referendum on a special-purpose, local-option sales tax for emergency services and road

improvements. The proposed 1-percent tax (1 cent per dollar) would raise an estimated \$14 million — \$6 million for emergency services, \$8 million for roads — and would expire in 2 1/2 years.

State Rep. John Bulloch told commissioners by letter the state will match 75 percent of sales tax revenue raised for road projects, adding another \$6 million, for a total of \$14 million for roads.

Stephenson said he feels a key challenge in winning public support for the tax may be to clarify

the county's previous time-limited, special-purpose taxes expired as scheduled, while the current general-purpose sales tax has no expiration date.

"They've confused those two types of sales taxes," Stephenson said, noting the only local-option sales tax in effect is the general-purpose tax for a variety of operations.

Commission Chairman Tim Sherrod commended Stephenson's presentation.

"The more informed the public is, the better off we are,"

Sherrod said.

Thomas County previously adopted two special-purpose taxes, both of which are no longer in effect. The one in 1985 raised \$12 million for roads and bridges and expired four years later. The one in 1989 raised \$10.5 million for libraries and for construction of the Jail-Justice Center and expired in 39 months.

In 1992, the county adopted a general-purpose sales tax with no expiration date. Revenue

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County:

from that tax funds operations such as libraries, animal control, the drug squad, recreation, economic development and emergency management.

Last year, the general-purpose sales tax raised \$5.3 million for those and other purposes.

If the proposed special-purpose tax were approved by voters, sales taxes in Thomas County would be at 6 percent: 4 percent in state taxes, 1 percent for the continuing general-purpose tax, and 1 percent for the new special-purpose tax for 2 1/2 years.

County commissioners have scheduled a meeting with the county's mayors for April 6. Thirty days later, it will be free to vote to sponsor a referendum on the proposed SPLOST. The target date for the vote is July 18.

Stephenson said approval of the proposed tax would advance the consolidation of emergency services, in which Thomas County and the city of Thomasville combined their

sources.
● Accepted a bid of \$288,956 to pave Westshore Drive, pending approval by residents who petitioned for the project and have to pay for part of it.

To contact reporter Laura Cassels, please call (912) 226-2400, ext. 225.

TUESDAY, JULY 18, 2000

Sales tax to be decided

SPLOST in hands of voters today

By Laura Cassels
laura.cassels@thomnews.com

THOMASVILLE — Hot races for Thomas County sheriff, Grady County sheriff, Grady County tax commissioner and other county posts are on the ballot today in Thomas and Grady counties, as well as a spe-

cial election in Thomas County on a new sales tax for emergency services and road improvements.

Polls will be open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Voters must bring formal identification (not including voter-registration cards) to cast their ballots in their assigned precincts.

THOMAS COUNTY

Thomas County voters will decide whether to adopt a 1-per-

cent, special-purpose, local-option sales tax (SPLOST) to raise up to \$14 million in 2 1/2 years or less. The tax is designed in part to raise \$6 million to buy equipment such as fire trucks and dispatching consoles and to build facilities to house firefighters, ambulance crews and 911 dispatchers.

The tax also would raise \$8 million for road-paving throughout the county. The Georgia Department of Transportation would match 75 percent of the

funds used for road projects, adding roughly \$6 million to the fund for road improvements, including road resurfacing and bridge projects, said DOT spokeswoman Jilayne Jordan.

By state law, the tax, if adopted, must expire in 30 months and can be used only for purposes described on today's ballot.

The special-election question will appear today on both Democratic and Republican ballots.

Also today, Thomas countians will choose a sheriff for

the next four years and narrow the field of candidates in two County Commission races.

Sheriff's candidates are incumbent Carlton Powell and challenger Greg Hobbs, both Democrats. The race will be decided in today's primary. Voters wishing to vote in this race must choose the Democratic ballot.

County Commission races are in districts 4 and 8. In

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TUESDAY, JULY 18, 2000

Local officials unite in promoting sales tax

By Laura Cassels
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THOMASVILLE — Elected officials from Thomas County and its small cities rallied at the Thomas County Courthouse Monday to show their support for the proposed sales-tax referendum on today's ballot.

"It's vital for our county to improve emergency services," said Boston Mayor Danny Groover. "I strongly support it."

Pavo Mayor L.M. Taylor, a longtime volunteer fire chief, said the tax is a good way to raise money for better fire protection, better ambulance response times, better emergency dispatching and better roads.

"This way, everybody is paying the bill," Taylor said. "Property owners ought to support it strongly."

Thomas County Commissioner L.L. Mullins endorsed the tax plan and expressed confidence voters will support it today.

"We're not going to let them kill this dream," Mullins said. "This tax is going to pass. I'm positive."

The sales-tax question on Thomas County's Democratic and Republican ballots today asks voters whether to adopt a 1-percent, special-purpose, local-option sales tax, or SPLOST, to raise \$14 million for emergency services and road projects. The tax would last 2 1/2 years (30 months), when by law it would expire.

The tax proposal earmarks \$6 million for emergency services improvements, such as building fire/medic substations in outlying areas of the county where response time is greatest, replacing aging fire trucks used by volunteer fire departments, acquiring a high-rise ladder truck and upgrading the county's 911 center and its dis-

patching equipment. The tax also earmarks \$8 million for road projects, with half dedicated to roads in unincorporated areas and half to roads and streets in the county's cities, based on their populations.

The Georgia Department of Transportation would contribute another \$6 million, said DOT spokeswoman Jilayne Jordan.

"We provide 75 cents for each dollar raised locally," Jordan said Monday.

The matching program applies to paving, resurfacing and maintenance of roads, streets and bridges financed by the local sales-tax revenue, to assist counties that make the "sacrifice" of levying local-option taxes upon themselves, she said.

The matching program also applies to "intermodal" transportation projects, such as sidewalks and bike paths, though Thomas County's sales-tax ballot language does not include those. Other elected officials endorsing the sales tax Monday were: Thomasville Mayor Roy Campbell, Thomasville City Councilman David O. Lewis, Barwick Mayor Thad Selman, Ochlocknee Mayor Ralford Long, Boston City Council members Richard Reynolds and Bertha Hunter, and Thomas County Commissioner Jim Miller.

Campbell said Coolidge Mayor David Dawson and Meigs Mayor Wayne Nesmith support the tax but could not attend Monday's rally.

Supporters said they favor the tax because it would:

- Be paid by all people who buy goods in Thomas County,

including commuters and tourists, and not just by property owners.

They said they prefer a new sales tax over an increase in property taxes.

- Shorten ambulance response times (now 17-20 minutes from Thomasville to

Meigs, for example), improve fire protection, and help reduce annual fire-insurance premium costs in outlying areas (for example, \$100 savings yearly on brick home

costing \$120,000 if ISO rating drops from 7 to 5).

- Pave and resurface roads in a fraction of the time expected on the current schedule.

- Make the county eligible for \$6 million in state matching funds for road projects.

The Thomasville-Thomas County Chamber of Commerce also endorses the sales-tax proposal, calling it a good "business opportunity" that would improve Thomas County's quality of life and its appeal to prospective businesses.

There has been no unified opposition to the plan, though individuals have said Thomas County should keep its sales-tax advantage (having 5-percent sales taxes while its neighbors charge 7 percent) and should reallocate its existing general-purpose sales-tax revenue (shifting recreation funds to emergency services, for example) before seeking another sales tax.

The polls will be open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

To contact reporter Laura Cassels, please call (912) 226-2400, ext. 225.

"It's vital for our county to improve emergency services," I strongly support it."

Danny Groover
Boston Mayor

Sales tax passes

JULY 19, 2000 TIMES ENTERPRISE

Nearly 60 percent of voters approve 1-percent SPLOST

By Ira Schoffei

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THOMASVILLE — Three months of relentless campaigning and unprecedented teamwork paid off for Thomasville and Thomas County officials Tuesday night when voters overwhelmingly approved a 1-percent special-purpose, local-option sales tax.

Voters in every precinct except one — Ochlocknee — gave their support to the tax, which will fund a revamped Emergency Services Agency and miles of road improvements.

The final tally had 3,501 "yes" votes and 2,359 "no" votes for a margin of nearly 60-40 percent. In Ochlocknee, the lone dissenting precinct, the vote was close with the proposal being voted down by just 10 votes.

Even County Commission Chairman Tim Sherrod and Thomasville Mayor Roy Campbell, the strongest proponents for the SPLOST, were surprised by the outcome.

Special 1-percent sales tax

Yes — 3,501, 59.74 percent
No — 2,359, 40.25 percent

"When we started on this, we had a big hill to climb," Campbell said. "There were a lot of negatives out there. ... But all

the mayors supported it, and they worked at it. "I didn't know (the result) would be

this resounding, but I thought it would win by a clear majority."

Said Sherrod: "I felt like it would win, but the margin was a lot bigger than I thought. It reaffirms my faith in the people

of Thomas County. If they've got good information, they'll make the right decision. And I feel like they spoke in a resounding way tonight — that they want to improve their quality of life."

The SPLOST is designed to raise up to \$14 million in 2 1/2 years or less. With the approval, \$8 million will go to buy equipment such as fire trucks and dispatching consoles and to build facilities to house firefighters, ambulance crews and 911 dispatchers.

The tax also will raise \$8 million for road-paving throughout

the county. The Georgia Department of Transportation has confirmed it will match 75 percent of the funds used for road projects, adding roughly \$6 million to the fund for road improvements, including road resurfacing and bridge projects.

"This will help Thomasville, Thomas County and the rest of the cities in the county improve their fire codes and get their streets where they need to be," Campbell said.

When the tax was proposed

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SPLOST

earlier this year, city and county leaders feared they would have a difficult time getting the necessary votes. Constant battles between the two governments, along with struggles inside the county commission, gave opponents plenty of ammunition to question the officials' ability to work together.

But the sides came to a mutual agreement at a joint city-county meeting, and they have been unified in their campaign. With support from the Thomasville-Thomas County Chamber of Commerce, they held town hall meetings throughout the county, tirelessly educating their constituents. Tuesday night, the work

paid off. "Three months ago, the city and county seemed to be at odds," Sherrod recalled. "But we all realized, it was more important for us to work together. I think this will save some lives — no, I know it will."

By state law, the tax must expire in 30 months and can be used only for purposes described on the ballot.

"We pledged to the people that we would spend the money wisely and do what we said we would with it," Campbell said. "When we reach \$14 million, it will end."

To contact managing editor Ira Schoffei, call 228-2400, ext. 206.